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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health

Statement submitted by International Psychoanalytical Association Trust, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2009/100.

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Statement*

Mental Health for Global Health: making a difference

In an effort to study the scope of global mental health problems, a group of diplomats, United Nations agencies and clinicians gathered at the United Nations Headquarters on 24 November 2008 for a day long round table discussion entitled "Mental Health: Making a Difference". The contributors represented the United Nations Secretariat, Member States and civil society. The President of ECOSOC, representatives from Qatar and Luxembourg, and representatives of several NGOs presented their views. In addition, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and psychologists detailed their field experience and clinical findings. Examples were presented from work in China, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Qatar, India, Yemen and the United States of America.

There is no health without mental health, and mental and physical health are closely intertwined. Mental health is connected to all the areas of the United Nations agenda, in programs for peace, security, human rights and development.

Undiagnosed and untreated mental illnesses and the lack of adequate resources have produced an alarming world condition. People with mental illness are at risk of human rights abuses and should be protected under the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, the proliferation of conflict and natural disasters, migrations and discrimination against vulnerable populations (women, children, and those with mental illness) are major factors that interfere with a constructive process.

There is a significant lack of funding for mental health due to differences in definition of the problem, lack of knowledge and stigma. Moreover, the current financial crisis is increasing stress and mental disorders and will make funding of new and existing programs even more difficult.

Despite cultural differences in the definition of mental health, the cross-cultural similarities of mental illness are striking. In conclusion, the participants acknowledged that psychotherapy is inexpensive, effective, and readily disseminated.

Recommendations to ECOSOC:

- To implement the Millennium Development Goals to significantly improve mental health, to incorporate mental health perspective into all the United Nations agendas and programs and to continue to support a Mental Health Day at the United Nations.

- To encourage partnerships with the private sector to assist with funding for education and training.

* Issued without formal editing.

- To increase the use of mental health literacy projects to provide knowledge about mental health and mental illness, and to use multimedia to increase tolerance and reduce indifference to mental illness.

- To establish a global community of mental health care providers and to develop education and training on a global scale.

- To protect the rights of individuals with mental illness from abuses under the auspices of the Geneva Convention.

- To determinate the best practices that build self-esteem, hope and opportunity for girls and women.

- To provide safeguards of the mental health of the care providers who themselves may be at risk in these most stressful situations.

- To contribute to the outcome of key intergovernmental and interagency processes, to set up forums for global dialogue and policy review with a view to encourage partnerships between the United Nations Secretariat, Member States and NGOs in order to change attitude towards mental health and mental illness.